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Training for Senior Managers in Government

21 – 26 July, 2002 Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan

Summary

The 9th annual program: ***Training for Senior Managers in Government*** was conducted in Petropavlosk for 56 Akims and Secretaries of Maslikhats from the Oblasts of: Northern Kazakhstan, Karaganda, and Kostenai. Both the Presidential Administration and the Northern Kazakhstan Oblast contributed to the logistical, travel, and personnel support for this program. The seminar was a discussion and a dialog with local government leaders of the three Oblasts. The components of the training included the topics:

- Change (the process of change in Kazakhstan), Principles of Democracy (democratic theory and structures of government),
- The First Amendment's Influence (how civil society has grown and its day-to-day influence on the role of government),
- Local-Government vs. Self-Government (a comparison of different concepts of local-government),
- Recommendations on The Law on Local Government (feedback from Akims and Secretaries of Maslikhats to the Republican Government),
- Budgets and the Budget Process (comparison of U.S. city and county methodologies),
- Citizen participation in government (roles within the civil society),
- Future Changes Identified by Akims and Secretaries of Maslikhats (results of the seminar which can be made in each participant's local administration).

One of the goals of the program was to encourage appointed (Akims appointed by the Presidential Administration) and elected officials (Secretaries of Maslikhats) to work together as a team. It became clear though that the Akims are the real power and the Maslikhats generally wield little power or influence (except in the larger cities).

The presence of Senator Leonid Nicolaevich Burlakov provided a truly unique opportunity for local government officials to respond and contribute their perspectives to the Republican government. Senator Burlakov is the Chairman of the Committee on the Law for Local Government. The American training staff integrated Senator Burlakov into the program schedule. The delegates made substantial recommendations to the Senator regarding the law on local government which is currently in draft form.

One of the important outcomes of the program was the mere fact that this large number of local officials came together to exchange ideas and perspectives, both with each other and with their American colleagues. Whereas U.S. leaders in government constantly take advantage of networking opportunities, join associations, and attend conferences, these opportunities are generally unavailable to local government officials in Kazakhstan. The joint U.S./Kazakhstan government sponsorship of this program was a positive factor for the delegates.



Change

The very first word of the seminar was "CHANGE." The ten year anniversary of independence provided an excellent opportunity to recall the changes of the years (in contrast to the Soviet days), and propose changes for the future. The delegates took the full opportunity to offer ideas regarding change, change in the structures of local government, and changes in the relationship between local government and the citizens of their cities, and oblasts.

Principles of Democracy

The exchanges on principles of American democracy provided the opportunity to contrast both the political assumptions Kazakhstan today, during the Soviet and other democratic systems from the world. This discussion aroused in examining the meaning of democratic as well as democratic practices. Discussions of the structures of government in the U.S. (city, county, state, federal) and the separation of powers (judicial, legislative, administrative) reinforced concepts of a pluralistic society.

The First Amendment's Influence

The discussion on the "freedoms" contained within the 1st Amendment led to day-to-day examples which our local leaders in the U.S. encounter. How mayors handle the press, free speech, associations, etc. was traced back to the Amendment. Due to these restrictions on government action, cooperation is necessitated.

question: "does efficiency comes through control or efficiency comes through political



"Change is a constant. Efficiency comes from change, not from stronger vertical power."

Seminar Trainer, Michael Palmbach



"We all agree to play by certain rules, even though the rules may be unwritten, they still govern our interactions...our principles of American democracy can be summed in five points:

- **The Contract**, government is a contract between the people and those who govern,
- **The Experiment**, government is an ever-changing experiment
- **The Balance**, government efficiency is balanced by the democratic process,
- **Minority Political Rights**, minority views have a right to exist and are protected,
- **Limiting Government Power**, government power is limited through decentralization and by the law."

Seminar Trainer, Thomas Volgy

"Our Constitution was not written perfect, nor will it ever be perfect, it must fit the needs of the people and the time.....in 1791 we added the 1st Amendment, which strongly influences the role of government in our society even today:

*freedom of religion,
freedom of speech,
freedom of the press,
freedom of association,
freedom to petition the government..."*

Seminar Trainer, Michael Palmbach

dialog and conflict" was debated lively.

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Local-Government vs. Self-Government

At one point in the seminar the lead trainer became confused over the words and the radically different concepts attached to the phrases “local-government” and “self-government”. The interpreters themselves the words interchangeably, yet the reaction of the participants at the confusion of these concepts was immediate and vocal. The distinction made to the differences of the two follow:

“Look at Russia, Chechnya is a result of empowerment of self-government.”

Program delegate

“So far self-government is a hypothetical concept, when we first tried it we couldn’t make sense of it.”

Program delegate

used

Local-Government does not mean more overall autonomy, **it means a clear definition of roles under the unitary form of government.** Local government does not mean separating municipalities from oblast oversight, nor removing the oversight responsibility of the republican government. Local-government in an American mentality is a completely different animal than it is in Kazakhstan. There is no desire for a U.S. style federalist system where the “whole is comprised of the parts,” rather under local-government the “the parts are a subdivision of the whole.” Local-government in America is very close to the definition of self-government, see below:

Self-Government implies a breaking of ties between the levels of government, i.e. that a local city administration would not be under the guidance of oblast officials, nor would there be revenue sharing, nor budgets from the higher level of government. Self-government is abhorred, not desired, it is not for other people....not for Kazakhstan, not today.

The Law on Local Government

The delegates in the program took advantage of meeting with the Senator heading the Chairman of the Committee the Law for Local Government. The form of communication and dialog that U.S. training staff utilized was easily adapted to providing feedback to the Senator. The training staff gave an assignment related to “*what would you local Akims and Secretaries of Maslikhats want to see in the new law?*”. responses follow:

“We need as soon as possible a law on Local-Government.

We need a resolution by the Head of the Country on the separation of authorities at the local government level.

We could start for example with providing municipalities and oblasts their own budgets which show the division of responsibilities.

No other government level deals with schools, culture, etc. (this should be spelled out). The Oblast should have it own and separate responsibilities.”

Program delegate

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Recommendations on The Law on Local Government

The following comments are verbatim transcriptions of some of the ideas offered regarding desired amendments and directions for the proposed Law on Local Government.

- “Give more real responsibilities to Maslikhats. Only people at the local levels know what people need: more authorities to lower Akims.”
- “Local Akims should have their own authority to make decisions, i.e.: I will use this piece of land for this purpose, and put the money in my budget.”
- “Delegation of authority to lower levels of government.”
- “It is on the local level that we face all problems.”
- “Budgets for villages.” “Our own local budgets.”
- “Tax revenues should remain locally.”
- “Akims should have a contract for a certain period of time. There should be measurements against which performance is measured, this measurement should be based on the Akim's contract. The Akim should define and determine how much money is given to the higher forms of government”.
- “Candidates for Rayon Akims should be submitted to Maslikhats for their approval, because they (the Maslikhats) are representatives of the people. An Akim appointed this way will put together his team...”
- “Akims should sign a contract with the Maslikhat.
- “Protection of Akims at local levels.”
- “We are also on the President's Team, we are unitary. People at the top want us to get approval on all things – each level needs its own responsibilities.”
- “The local government law should be vertical and very strict and strong, then we can talk about other things such as self-government.”
- “A three year agreement on what taxes will be sent to higher levels of government. So that regions will know that if they collect more money, it will stay there. Maslikhats should be able to impose fees on their own territory.”
- “Protect Maslikhats so that they can't be punished at their job for what the saw.”
- “Define funds & revenues.”
- “Decentralization of power, each region should have the ability to make their own particular regulations (four Regions in the country).”
- “Better regulations on taxes.”
- “Decentralization, rural Akims need to have their own budget.”
- “These are urgent measures: a law on local self-government, and election of local Akims.”

Program Perspective:

“This year, more than ever in the past, local government officials are participating in a vigorous debate of what local government should look like in the future. There was a special emphasis, almost a demand, for local control of local budgets.”

Seminar trainer. Sharon Hekman



As the discussion continued on local government, the following contribution was made: “pair donor cities with rayons, this would be a step to local self-government.” This again reinforces that local governments do not at this time desire autonomy from the central government. There are too many risks involved, and too few benefits that can be recognized. It is clear that the participants are intent on finding Kazakhstani solutions for Kazakhstani problems. “Attempts are being made to put on us Bulgarian or Mongolian shirts, and our approach to government should not be theirs, no matter how much they give us,” U.S. or European or other Asian models will not be adopted wholesale for application in Kazakhstan.

Budgets and the Budget Process

Two half-day sessions were devoted to budgeting at the local level. There was a high degree of interest and enthusiastic participation in discussing the budget process in different sized American cities. The openness of the budget and the budget process itself was of particular interest. The total public nature of budgets and expenditures was amazing, as well as the administrative procedures utilized that monies are utilized efficiently and for their desired outcome.

Citizen Participation in Government

Involving citizens in participating in solving municipal problems struck a strong cord with the delegates in the program. Discussions focused on sharing of information, involvement of civic organizations, and relinquishing government functions to the private sector and NGOs where possible. At the conclusion of the program many of the participants were able to articulate ways in which they could involve the public through use of transparent means of government operations.

Future Changes Identified by Akims and Secretaries of Maslikhats

At the conclusion of the program the delegates were challenged to identify what changes they would make in their own administration when they returned home. Each of the participants rose from their chair and made at least one statement (duplicates have been eliminated). The responses of intended changes include (these are provided verbatim):

<p>“Hold regular meetings with the people.” “More contacts with people.”</p> <p>“More public hearings, introduce an open and transparent budget system.”</p> <p>“Make boards or committees which can help the city develop an open and transparent budget.”</p> <p>“Open a website for the city to share more information, the budget, data.”</p> <p>“Discuss problems with people, bring them into the decision making process.”</p> <p>“Make an accurate analysis of the resources in the local area.”</p> <p>“Identify budget categories; beginning working with Capital and Operating budgets.”</p> <p>“Economic development, search for additional sources of income, investigate new and different industries.”</p> <p>“Make staff changes.”</p> <p>“Develop a grant program for projects which can be accomplished by non-governmental groups.”</p> <p>“Develop partnerships with commissions and boards.”</p> <p>“Develop partnerships with higher levels of government.”</p> <p>“Develop partnerships with state agencies (police, land committees, ministries).”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ “Decentralization at the local level.” ❖ “Change relationship with ministries.” ❖ “Work with people...use the U.S. mentality, create public boards and commissions.” ❖ “Introduce a transparent and open budget system like in the U.S..” ❖ “Partnerships.” ❖ “Supervision role should be given to people.” ❖ “Transparency in using government resources.” ❖ “Flexible taxation policy.” ❖ “Freedom for freedom...give more freedom to the population and listen to them (through surveys, etc.). We should be more free and less ridged.” ❖ “Strengthen local government, move toward local self-government.” ❖ “Make long-term and short-term budgets.” ❖ “Communicate openly, using your (American) methodologies.” ❖ “Develop partnerships with the media, NGOs, and businesses.” ❖ “Change our attitudes to the mass media.” ❖ “Take the initiative to contact the mass media and inform citizens.” ❖ “Implement a policy of compromise with NGOs (50-50).” ❖ “Develop NGO partnerships.”
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